

Practice and Response of China-Vietnam International Business Negotiation from the Perspective of Culture

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Abstract: With the deepening of globalization, the economic and trade cooperation between China and Vietnam has been continuously deepened, and the business exchanges have become increasingly frequent. As the key link of cooperation, the effectiveness of international business negotiation is closely related to the adaptation of the cultural characteristics of both sides. China and Vietnam have formed their own cultural characteristics in the long-term development, which have a direct impact on the negotiation process in the communication mode, cooperation goals, and other aspects. By analyzing the cultural characteristics in the commercial negotiations in the map, the paper puts forward the corresponding adaptive strategy, aiming to provide a reference for the enterprise's smooth business cooperation.

Keywords: China-Vietnam business negotiation; Cultural characteristics; Acculturation strategies

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1. Research background

As an important neighbor of China, Vietnam is located in the eastern part of the Indochina Peninsula. With its unique geographical advantages, Vietnam occupies an important position in regional economic cooperation. The trade between China and Vietnam has a long history. From the ancient border trade to the modern comprehensive economic and trade cooperation, the bilateral relations have been developing steadily through practical exchanges. From January to November 2023, Chinese tourists became the second largest source of tourists in Vietnam's tourism industry, demonstrating the friendly interaction and willingness to understand each other between the two peoples.

Such multi-level exchanges have laid a solid foundation for bilateral business cooperation and increased investment and cooperation opportunities between enterprises. As the key link of cooperation, the smoothness of business negotiation directly affects the effectiveness of cooperation. China and Vietnam have formed their own distinctive cultural traditions in the long-term development. These cultural characteristics naturally emerge

in business negotiations. Understanding and adapting to these characteristics can help reduce misunderstandings in communication and improve negotiation efficiency. At present, there is still room to expand the research on acculturation in China-Vietnam business negotiation. In-depth discussion on relevant topics can provide a certain reference value for promoting more efficient cooperation between enterprises of the two countries.

2. Cultural characteristics of China and Vietnam and their embodiments in business scenarios

2.1. Hierarchical concept in social structure

Both Chinese and Vietnamese cultures attach great importance to social hierarchy and collective order. In both social organizations and business environments, Chinese and Vietnamese people generally recognize and respect reasonable hierarchical relationships and believe that a clear division of roles is the basis for efficient collaboration. In this cultural atmosphere of China and Vietnam, the leadership position of authority figures is widely respected and accepted, and the low-status people are used to showing a high degree of obedience and respect to the high-status people. This culture is also regarded as a key factor in maintaining social stability and improving efficiency.

2.2. The value orientation of collective orientation

Both China and Vietnam, as countries deeply rooted in “collectivism culture”, emphasize the importance of collective interests and group cooperation. Although in recent years, with the acceleration of globalization and the arrival of the information age, some young people have begun to show their recognition and pursuit of individualistic values, the collectivism culture is still deeply rooted and dominates the core value system of the society. Therefore, in the work environment under this cultural background, employment decisions and employees’ promotion opportunities are often not only based on individual ability and performance, but also deeply affected by the internal dynamics of the employees’ group, which reflects a complex and subtle network of group relations.

2.3. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the behavioral strategies adopted by individuals or organizations in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity. It reflects the social members to the threat of a feeling of an uncertain situation and their efforts to avoid such a situation. According to the cultures of China and Vietnam, both countries show strong adaptability and inclusiveness in the face of the unknown and change. In this culture, people tend to face the risks and the unknown while keeping a relaxed attitude, willing to embrace change and new challenges, as opportunities for growth and exploration. In addition, the rules and regulations of the society are relatively relaxed, and diversity and individual choice are encouraged, so that different fields of thought can be tolerated and ideas can go hand in hand. Vietnamese people are generally believed to be too bound by the rules of freedom; they tend to be flexible when necessary, rather than formalized accurately and on time. The cultural features of low uncertainty avoidance but also embodied in the relaxed attitude on planning for the future, reducing unnecessary anxiety and stress. The Chinese, on the other hand, are willing to accept ambiguity, and the Chinese language is full of ambiguities that are difficult for Westerners to understand. The Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial.

2.4. Long-term orientation and short-term orientation

Long-term oriented culture tends to emphasize the importance of persistence, frugality, and planning for the future, while short-term oriented culture focuses more on the value of timely enjoyment, encourages the focus on the

present, respect for tradition, and respect for past experience.

The value orientation of the culture on the time dimension of each has been particularly emphasized. Vietnam is a relatively practical country, where the people appreciate both long-standing culture and also recognize the need for progress and innovation. This flexible way of thinking allows them to easily integrate traditions into the ever-changing environment. China, on the other hand, is a typical long-term country, a pragmatist-oriented society in which people believe that truth depends largely on circumstances, context, and time. They can easily adapt their traditions to changing conditions, have a strong propensity to save and invest, be frugal, and persevere when results are achieved. They also pay great attention to the process of things and the establishment and maintenance of relationships, and like long-term and stable cooperation.

3. The influence of China-Vietnam cultural characteristics on business negotiations

3.1. The embodiment of the concept of hierarchy in business negotiations

Both Chinese and Vietnamese teams attach great importance to the division of roles and decision-making order within the team, and the position of the core decision maker is particularly prominent in the negotiation, whose opinions often play a key role in the negotiation trend. Negotiations began, and the two sides will use many ways to quickly understand the team's organizational structure and level within the negotiating teams. Leaders often accompanied by significant status symbols, such as the leaders arranged in the middle seat, provide limousine pick-up service, in the main negotiation outdoor set up exclusive lounge, etc. This kind of phenomenon occurs in all kinds of negotiations between the two countries. In countries with high power distance, such status symbols are particularly important, and both sides understand and adapt to such arrangements ^[2]. In the negotiation process, both sides often show a strong demand for status consistency. They will advance communication negotiations and participate at the level of personnel, especially the hierarchy of the other team leader, in order to make corresponding arrangements to ensure that their head attends the negotiations. In decision-making linked to business negotiations, the team leader on both sides has the final decision; the subordinate plays an auxiliary role, supporting the superior decision-making process. If the subordinate interferes too much with the superior's decision, it may be regarded as violating the privilege of the management.

3.2. Influence of collective orientation on business negotiation

Both China and Vietnam have typical collectivist cultural characteristics in business negotiations, and both put "harmonious relationship" and "group consensus" in an important position. In the dialogue, the two sides will usually speak in a more implicit, low-key, and indirect way. In the face of communication disorders, they can take a consideration for collective solutions. Due to the similarity between the two sides, the business negotiation between the two sides will be smoother and more conducive to the achievement of the goal of the negotiation ^[3].

"Face" is especially important in business negotiation occasions. There are different ways for the maintenance of face; one is the emphasis on the personal appearance of an outstanding professional. For example, in business communication, both Chinese and Vietnamese people attach great importance to dress on negotiation occasions. One of the basic forms of respect is business dress. On the other hand, it emphasizes respect for individuals, hoping that their prestige and status will be recognized and respected in the group ^[4]. Then, the behavior of "giving face" usually includes praise, appreciation, and respect, avoiding criticism and conflict. For the behavior of "face", the Chinese team usually does very well. After judging the psychological status of the negotiation opponent, a

euphemistic compliment is added in the negotiation to make the negotiation tone more gentle and not aggressive, and try to make the negotiation opponent in a state of disarming and keep the negotiation atmosphere in a harmonious state ^[5].

In the negotiation process, the Chinese side tries to avoid direct confrontation with the other side, and often expresses rejection and disapproval in euphemistic ways, such as “we still need to discuss” and “maybe you are right”, so as to keep the atmosphere in a harmonious state. Chinese teams in the process of negotiations seldom use the word “no” directly, because the blunt refusal in collectivist cultures is regarded as a very abrupt and self-righteous behavior. However, when using a “yes”, “good”, the clear words such as “yes”, the Chinese team is not actually expressing consent in the absolute, but rather a polite response ^[6]. Chinese people usually do not have a very firm “yes” or “no” attitude in formal negotiation situations that are not very intense, because the way Chinese people express themselves, whether negative or positive, is more implicit. Therefore, in the negotiation process, if interpreters do not understand the Chinese speaking style when translating from Chinese to Vietnamese, they will often miss the tone and behavior of the original speaker, making the Vietnamese side unable to accurately understand the meaning expressed by the Chinese side ^[7].

3.3. The practice of flexible and adaptable characteristics in business negotiations

A tolerant attitude towards the uncertainty in the culture makes both parties in a negotiation bring strong flexibility and adaptability. The details of the face are not the default; both parties do not stick to a rigid process, but tend to be “practical” in finding a solution. For example, if a clause is found to be difficult to implement during the negotiation, the two sides will make adaptations by adding explanations and adjusting additional conditions, rather than terminating the discussion because it “does not meet the preset requirements” ^[8].

This flexibility is also reflected in the acceptance of new modes of cooperation. For cooperation involving new technologies and new fields, the two sides pay more attention to practical feasibility than inherent experience, and reduce risks by inviting professionals to participate in communication and phased pilot projects. This open attitude provides possibilities for cross-field cooperation. At the same time, the negotiations of time “elastic” tolerance is more obvious, if an emergency needs to adjust their agenda negotiations, both sides often need to understand the attitude of the negotiations at the new time, and avoid the influence due to strictly abiding by the form ^[9].

3.4. The influence of long-term orientation and short-term orientation on business negotiation goals

In the negotiation process between the Chinese and Vietnamese teams, the two teams will have great differences in the goals of the project. China’s national team as a long-term orientation culture, pay more attention to the long-term value of cooperation, in the negotiations will focus on terms of the influence of several rounds of cooperation in the future, such as the price mechanism, the respect such as service cycle tend to set the elastic clause, adjust the leave room for long; Also according to the actual situation on the condition of the negotiations to make some concession or compromise, be willing in friendly relations and cooperation between the goals and temporarily reduce their own interests ^[10]. As a country with a short-term orientation culture, Vietnam pays more attention to the implementation of the current stage while attaching importance to long-term cooperation, and will clarify the path to achieve short-term goals in the negotiation, such as phased delivery nodes and acceptance standards. This difference in time horizon may promote the two sides to form a “combination of long and short” cooperation

plan in the negotiation ^[11]. For example, in project cooperation, the Chinese side may pay more attention to the long-term planning of technology transfer, while the Vietnamese side pays more attention to the implementation effect of initial training. Through communication, the consensus is finally reached that basic training should be completed first, and then technology upgrading should be gradually promoted.

4. Acculturation strategies in China-Vietnam business negotiations

4.1. Make preparations for cultural cognition in the early stage

The smooth progress of cross-cultural business negotiations begins with a deep understanding of the cultural characteristics of both sides. Before the talks can be through the system research, China understands the culture of Vietnam business scenarios and related core characteristics, such as social etiquette, communication habits, the idea of cooperation, a particular focus on local custom specification formed in long-term relationships, such as emphasis on teamwork, accepting flexibility, and avoiding misunderstanding caused by cultural cognitive biases ^[12]. At the same time, combining their own cultures and negotiation-related behavior, such as emphasis on long-term cooperation, respect for hierarchy, etc., they need to keep clear in cross-cultural settings, principles, and flexible adjustment of space. The appropriate negotiation team should be arranged in advance to ensure that members have cross-cultural communication awareness and can keenly capture the cultural signals of the other side, laying a foundation for smooth communication.

4.2. Uphold cultural respect and inclusiveness

Since ancient times in China, they have been known as a formal state, and for their beauty. Influenced by Confucian culture, many rituals and customs in Vietnam are very similar to those in China. In the negotiation process, when faced with euphemistic opinions, people can explore the real demands through patient inquiry and positive feedback, rather than conflict due to differences in expression methods ^[13]. At the same time, respect does not mean unprincipled compromise, but on the premise of sticking to the bottom line of cooperation, people should optimize cooperation paths by adjusting communication methods and so on, so that different cultural characteristics of countries can become a bridge rather than an obstacle to promote cooperation and understanding. China should also pay particular attention to showing respect in detail and conveying sincerity for cooperation through them ^[14].

4.3. Pay attention to the legal effect of contracts

The sustainability of business cooperation cannot be separated from the joint commitment to the spirit of the contract. After reaching a cooperation consensus, both parties should pay attention to the strictness of the contract text, ensure that the terms are clear, the rights and responsibilities are clear, and fully reflect the core demands and risk prevention mechanism in cooperation. The Chinese should pay special attention to the law of Vietnam's local environment and business practices, to contract in the execution of the standard, way of dispute resolution, such as content, communication with legal professionals in advance, and ensure compliance with local regulations ^[15]. At the same time, in the process of contract performance, the Chinese side should maintain continuous communication with the other party. When unexpected situations occur, the Chinese side should not only respect the contract provisions, but also flexibly negotiate to solve them. This is both the seriousness of the maintenance contracts, as well as Chinese culture's emphasis on relationship maintenance, implementation specification, and flexible balance.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the cultural characteristics of China and Vietnam and their impacts on business negotiations, clarifying the similarities and differences between the two countries in terms of social hierarchy concepts, collective orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and time orientation, as well as their specific reflections in negotiation decision-making, communication methods, and goal-setting. The study finds that although Chinese and Vietnamese cultures are both influenced by concepts such as collectivism and share common ground in hierarchy respect and relationship maintenance, there are still differences in the emphasis on long-term cooperation planning versus short-term execution, and the practical scale of flexible adaptation. These characteristics collectively shape the unique logic of bilateral negotiations.

Based on this, the proposed cultural adaptation strategies emphasize pre-negotiation cognitive preparation as the foundation, respect and inclusiveness as the principle, and contract standardization as the guarantee, aiming to help enterprises of both sides resolve communication barriers caused by cultural differences. In the future, with the further deepening of China-Vietnam economic and trade cooperation, enterprises need to continuously strengthen their cross-cultural negotiation capabilities. They should not only leverage the common advantages in the two cultures to build trust but also rationally address differences to optimize cooperation plans. Only in this way can the potential of bilateral cooperation be fully tapped, and China-Vietnam business exchanges be promoted towards a more efficient and stable direction.

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